

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
IO-13 OMB-01 SSM-03 MCT-01 DHA-02 ACDA-07 ORM-02
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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7713

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USIA WASHDC

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USIA FOR IOP/M

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, SA, XF

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL ON PALESTINIAN ENCLAVE IN CAIRO

1. PARAGRAPH 2 CONTAINS THE TEXT OF AN EDITORIAL ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PNC MEETING IN CAIRO WHICH APPEARED IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY ARAB NEWS ON MARCH 20. WE FIND THE EDITORIAL INTERESTING FOR ITS CONTENT--A DISPASSIONATE, SOMEWHAT CYNICAL AND ON THE WHOLE NEGATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE IN GENERAL AND A SHARPLY CRITICAL VIEW OF THE REJECTIONISTS. WE FIND IT PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE IT PROBABLY REFLECTS A VIEW HELD BY SAG OFFICIALS. IN GENERAL SAUDI EDITORIAL WRITERS ARE NOT TOLD WHAT TO WRITE. BUT THEY HAVE A PRETTY GOOD FEEL FOR WHAT THEY SHOULD NOT WRITE AND WHEN IN DOUBT WILL GENERALLY CHECK OUT THE PROPOSED EDITORIAL LINE WITH SAG OFFICIALS. IT IS FAIRLY SAFE TO ASSUME THAT THIS WAS THE CASE WITH THE PRESENT EDITORIAL SINCE THE ARAB NEWS HAS JUST RESUMED PUBLISHING AFTER AN UNOFFICIAL THREE DAY SUSPENSION FOR PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE OFFENSIVE TO THE ULEMA.

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2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN TEXT.

LESSON TO LEARN.

THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, IN RESISTING FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS EFFORTS TO RECONVENE THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, KNEW WHAT IT WAS DOING. THE CURRENT SESSION OF THE COUNCIL IN CAIRO, ONLY MADE POSSIBLE AFTER THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, BETRAYS THE SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT. THE FIERCE DISPUTES AND DEEP DIVISIONS THAT MADE 1970 AND 1971 IN JORDAN POSSIBLE AND USHERED IN THE DECLINE OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN LEBANON IN 1975 AND 1976 ARE STILL AS FIERCE AND AS DEEP AS EVER. THE MOVEMENT REMAINS TORN BETWEEN THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT AND ARAB REGIMES THAT USE, OR MORE PRECISELY, ABUSE THE MOVEMENT TO SERVE THEIR OWN ENDS.

BUT WHAT IS WORSE ABOUT THE CURRENT SESSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS THAT THE WHOLE ATMOSPHERE OF THE DEBATES AND DELIBERATIONS IS AN EXACT REPLICA OF 1974'S COUNCIL OR THE COUNCIL BEFORE IT. ALL THE NEW FACTORS AND ELEMENTS THAT HAVE EMERGED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS DO NOT SEEM TO DISTURB THE RESISTANCE LEADERS. DESPITE ITS EXPANSION, OSTENSIBLY TO BRING IN MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS, THE COUNCIL HAS AGAIN SPLIT BETWEEN A MINORITY OF HARD-LINERS AND A MAJORITY OF MODERATES ARGUING WHETHER THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION SHOULD ATTEND THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE. OF COURSE, THE PLO HAS STILL TO BE INVITED--A MINOR POINT IF ONE IS TO JUDGE BY THE ATTITUDE OF THE GATHERED LEADERS. THE ARGUMENT IS A REPETITION OF 1974 THAT HAS FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY PALESTINIAN LEADERS INSIST ON DISCUSSING A QUESTION WHICH--UNTIL THEY RECEIVE AN INVITATION--REMAINS HYPOTHETICAL AT BEST.

AMONG THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS WHOSE IMPORTANCE SEEMS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAVE BEEN LOST ON THE COUNCIL IS PRESIDENT CARTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PALESTINIAN "REFUGEES" SHOULD BE GIVEN A HOMELAND. THE INITIAL REACTION TO THE NEWS HAS BEEN A COMPLAINT AGAINST MR. CARTER'S REFERENCE TO "REFUGEES" INSTEAD OF "PEOPLE." WE HAVE NOW WITNESSED A GROWING PALESTINIAN ALLERGY TO THE WORD "REFUGEES" ALTHOUGH IT DESCRIBES THEM ACCURATELY AND DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THEIR BEING A "PEOPLE." THEY ARE A REFUGEE PEOPLE UNTIL THEY RETURN HOME.

WHEN THEY DO (WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THEY WILL), IT WON'T BE BECAUSE MR. CARTER HAS SUDDENLY DISCOVERED THAT THEY NEED OR DESERVE A HOMELAND BUT BECAUSE THEIR STRUGGLE WITH THE HELP OF THE OTHER ARAB PEOPLES, HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THE PALESTINIAN LEADERS MEETING IN CAIRO CAN BRING SUCCESS A DAY NEARER IF THEY RISE ABOVE THEIR PETTY SQUABBLES AND RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF A CHANGING INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CLIMATE BY DEVISING NEW POLICIES AND NEW APPROACHES INSTEAD OF LIVING IN THE PAST. THEY MAY HAVE A THOUSAND LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES ABOUT U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY, AND BECAUSE THEY DO, THEY MUST NOT ALLOW MR. CARTER'S SUGGESTION

OF A HOMELAND TO FIZZLE OUT. THEY WILL DO WELL TO REMEMBER
THAT IT IS AS DIFFICULT FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO MAKE BASIC
POLICY CHANGES AS IT IS FOR THEM TO TRUST A WASHINGTON
ADMINISTRATION.

IN THE END, THE ISSUE IS NOT HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT U.S.
POLICY AND WHETHER THEY CAN TRUST IT, BUT RATHER THAT THEY
HAVE NO OTHER LEAD TO WORK ON. THEY MUST ENCOURAGE ANY
CHANGE IN AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD THEIR CAUSE BECAUSE IT CAN
ONLY BE FOR THE BETTER AND BECAUSE ISRAEL WILL RESIST IT.
OTHERWISE, THEIR SHORTSIGHTEDNESS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ISRAEL'S
BEST ASSET IN WASHINGTON. END TEXT.
PORTER

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